

STRANGER THINGS

Director Scott Derrickson takes us through what goodies fans can expect from the home entertainment release of the latest Marvel blockbuster, *Doctor Strange*. Words Adam Colby

When you put *Doctor Strange* into your DVD or Blu-ray player, make sure that your remote is nearby: searching for easter eggs and hidden messages is a tradition in films in Marvel's Cinema Universe, and director Scott Derrickson is confident that fans will be constantly hitting the pause button with the latest superhero blockbuster.

"Fans will find that they can pause the movie and look closely at most of the visual effects sequences because there is a lot of information on the screen," he explains. "There is a lot of detail in things that you're

not going to see on the first or even second viewing – and that was deliberate. I wanted those visual effect scenes to be so dense that you would want to see them again. Not for box office reasons, but because it's quite a lot to take in the first time."

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Doctor Strange tells the story of the titular surgeon (Benedict Cumberbatch), whose life is changed forever after a car accident renders his hands useless. When traditional medicine fails him, he

travels to the remote Kamar-Taj in search of a cure, but instead discovers the mystical arts and becomes a powerful sorcerer battling dark forces.

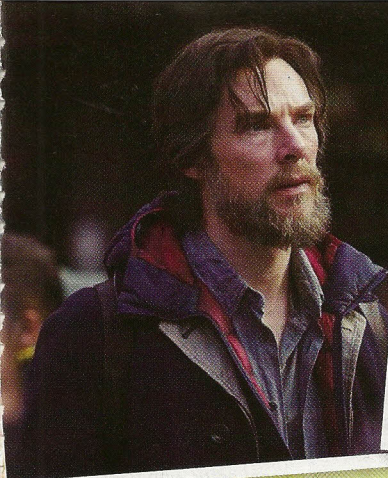
The Blu-ray edition features more than 80 minutes of exclusive bonus material, including deleted scenes. However, Derrickson maintains that the film hasn't changed too much from his first edit.

"*Doctor Strange* was never a long movie," he says. "The first cut was only 15 minutes longer than the final cut, which I think was two hours and 10 minutes. There were only three wholesale scenes that were cut; it was mostly trimming stuff down."

"The surprising part of the process is that what shrunk most were the set-pieces. There is not a lot of action in the movie in terms of quantity, truthfully. If you measure out the action scenes in this, I'll bet there's less action in this movie than any other Marvel movie, but it doesn't feel like that because the action is so demanding to watch. When something is so



Tilda Swinton and Benedict Cumberbatch playing with fire



visually demanding, the audience can only take so much of it."

Among the deleted scenes were a number featuring the film's main baddie, Kaecilius, played by Mads Mikkelsen. "One of them was a first meeting where Kaecilius kills one of the zealots and it just was too arch," Derrickson says. "We ended up taking it out because the movie played better without it, but it's not a bad scene."

Although the filmmaker is best known for horror flicks such as *Sinister* and *Deliver*

Us From Evil, he has long been a fan of this particular Marvel superhero.

"I've always loved the Doctor Strange comics. In the comic book universe, Doctor Strange was a psychedelic, spiritual, weird breath of fresh air that came in and expanded the limits of comic book visuals, ideas and characters. I wanted to make a movie that did the same thing to the Marvel Cinematic Universe."

So what scenes in the finished movie most stood out for Derrickson?

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"I think the two most magical moments were the first and last scenes that Benedict worked on with Tilda [Swinton, who plays the Ancient One], and the apartment scene with Benedict and Rachel [McAdams, who plays Christine Palmer]. The scene when Strange meets the Ancient One was incredible to see come to life. This was the first time I saw Tilda being the Ancient One and it was amazing. They were both incredible in that scene."

"The fight scene in the apartment between Christine and Strange stands out because it's such an intense scene. Every time that scene comes on, I suddenly feel like I'm in a gritty little indie movie!

There's so much human drama in the way Benedict explodes at her in such a horrible way, and it's all rooted in real pain. When you're on set and you're watching actors of that calibre do things like that, it's sublime." **S**

• Doctor Strange is out on March 1

STACK caught up with Benedict Cumberbatch at San Diego Comic-Con last year to talk *Sherlock*. But when it quickly became apparent there wasn't a lot he could reveal about the secrecy-shrouded fourth season, the conversation turned to *Doctor Strange*.

Making his comic book movie debut as the eponymous neurosurgeon who is drawn into the world of the mystic arts, the actor has nothing but praise for the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

"Marvel is an extraordinary family to be a part of," he says. "They do things just brilliantly and they never stop trying to get better and better with every film. It can be anything from the level of detail of the costume, to line changes or entire scenes being rewritten or reshot... they're so bold, and look at where it gets them. It's extraordinary."

When it came to playing a Marvel hero unlike any other, Cumberbatch remained pragmatic. "If you go into the film to fulfil expectations, you're going to fall flat on your face. You have to manage them somehow. It's an iconic role, like *Sherlock*, so there's a certain amount of 'this is how it has to be', but also being able to interpret it and make it your own. It's a wonderful character and the origin story is kick-ass. The amount of arc I had to play in that film, it's a dream project."

Cumberbatch adds that the character, although originating in the 1970s, is very much a hero for our time. "What works with Strange is we're living in an era that's defined by technology – a binary, logical universe. People are becoming isolated by very strong creative beliefs, and if anything, the message of the film is to free yourself to alternatives. Believe that there are answers that are not about what you think, but what others think as well. It's about belonging rather than excluding."

"There's a strong philosophy behind the film. It's not just, 'oh here's a character from the '70s, here's some eastern mysticism banging up against western science. It runs much deeper than that."